1.1. CLASSIFICATION

Kuuku Ya'u and Umpila have their few remaining speakers mainly at the Lockhart River Aboriginal Community on the east coast of Cape York Peninsula, Queensland. Kuuku Ya'u and Umpila are closely related coastal dialects and are also close to the inland dialect of Kaantju. These three dialects are classified by O'Grady, Voeglin and Voeglin (1966) with the 'Middle Pama Sub-group of the Pama-Maric Group of the Pama-Nyungan Family'. Sommer (1969) suggests a clearer classification of this Middle Pama Subgroup into Middle Pama and North-Eastern Pama Subgroups. Wurm follows Sommer by listing Umpila and Kaantju under the North-Eastern Pama Subgroup, and he tentatively places Koko Ya'o (Kuuku Ya'u) as a further subgroup. However, as a list of 500 common words has 87% common to both Umpila and Kuuku Ya'u, the three dialects rightly belong together in the North-Eastern Pama Subgroup.

1.3. DIALECT GROUPS

Kuuku Ya'u and Umpila are among a group of at least six closely related dialects which were originally spoken along the east coast and hinterland of Cape York Peninsula and inland to the west of the Great Dividing Range. The inland dialect is called Kaantju and the original distribution extended roughly from the present town of Coen to north of the old Moreton Post Office (about 200 Km.). The two main coastal dialects are Kuuku Ya'u and Umpila, and they are still spoken among the 400 residents of the Lockhart River Aboriginal Community. However, only the few older people have a full knowledge of the languages, while the middle generations have varying degrees of knowledge and are less certain of differences between dialects. The younger generation has a form of Creole English as the first language.

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LOCKHART RIVER "SAND BEACH" LANGUAGE
AN OUTLINE OF KUUKU YA'U AND UMPILA

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